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THE HUDSON'S-BAY COMPANY,  
CANADA WEST,  
AND THE INDIAN TRIBES.

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As is now well known the Aborigines' Protection Society, influenced by a sense of justice and humanity, have espoused the cause of the oppressed and degraded Indian tribes dwelling in that immense portion of our North-American possessions, which, under the Charter of 1670, has been for nearly two centuries under the rule of the Hudson's-Bay Company. The extensive publication of the Society's Memorial to Mr. Labouchere has been the means of attracting a large amount of public attention, both in this country and in Canada, to the condition of the Indians; and likewise to the question of the validity of the Hudson's-Bay Company's Charter, and the justice of the claim set up by Canada to extend her sway over a great portion, if not the whole, of British North America.

On the 26th of September last a deputation from the Society had the pleasure of an interview with Sir Allan M'Nab, formerly Prime Minister of Canada, and now, as then, a statesman who exercises commanding influence in the colony. Sir Allan suggested that the Society should memorialize both branches of the Canadian Parliament, with a view to the appointment of a Committee to consider, and report upon, the statements which the Society might make. In accordance with this advice, two Memorials have been forwarded to Sir Allan M'Nab; and he has promised to present, and to support, the one addressed to the Commons, and to secure the presentation of the other, addressed to the Legislative Council, by a gentleman well qualified to sustain its prayer. There can, therefore, be no doubt that during the ensuing session the question will be brought before the Canadian Parliament in a manner calculated to lead to practical and beneficial results.

On the 26th of November a deputation from the Society presented an address of welcome to the Bishop of Rupert's Land on his arrival in this country, and sought to obtain his powerful co-operation on behalf of the Society's measures for the amelioration of the condition of the Aborigines. His Lordship manifested much interest in the subject, and remarked that the feeling at the Red-River Settlement was in favour of a connection with Canada, rather

than with the United States. As will be seen from the following brief extracts from the printed report of the interview, the Bishop furnished some interesting and encouraging information regarding the Indians.

"His Lordship stated that the population of his diocese was comparatively small, but was scattered over a territory of vast extent. After having travelled two thousand miles, he had scarcely overtaken a third of the diocese. He believed that the natives would not disappear from the face of the earth, if they could be settled and christianized. He found that the natives on the Vancouver's side were inclined to agricultural pursuits, and to settle in villages. Of course, to enable them to commence farming, they required agricultural implements and cattle. They were, generally speaking, very attentive to the instructions of their clergymen, and, even as hunters, they carried their religious books with them, and he believed, on the Sabbath abstained from hunting. There were some native ordained ministers and some catechists, upon whom he had devolved a little power, and they went among the Indians teaching them to read and write what is called the syllabic characters. The children of the Indians are learning English; and he considered it an important element in the improvement of any native race, that they should learn the language of the civilized people who come among them, even if it was to exist concurrently with their own. His Lordship further stated that one of the means by which the Indians were being civilized was the introduction amongst them of syllabic writing, which was based upon the phonetic principle. The natives objected to the English characters because so many of them were needed to express simple sounds, whereas these new characters are free from that objection, and can be learnt by a native Indian in two or three days."

Public opinion in this country, as represented by the newspaper press, has not been slow to express its concurrence, not only in the special objects on behalf of the Indians which the Aborigines Protection Society are anxious to realise, but also in favour of the extension westward of the enlightened and constitutional Government of Canada. The following extracts from leading articles which have appeared in the columns of Whig, Conservative, Radical, Church, and Dissenting journals, prove that the question is one upon which all parties may patriotically unite.

The *Morning Post*, in September last, closed an able article on the desirability of extending Canada westward with the following significant remarks:—

"A few days ago we mentioned that the Canadian Government intended to bring the condition of the Hudson's-Bay territory under the consideration of the Home Government. On this point Mr. Vankougnet states that he had taken great pains to collect accurate information regarding the vast country called the Hudson's-Bay territory, and he was convinced that a very great extent of it was not inferior to the settled parts of Canada, either in soil or climate. Nay, more, he was convinced that if ever the Atlantic and Pacific were connected by railway, it must be through this territory and the Ottawa Valley, having the Gulf of St. Lawrence for its eastern outlet. Some people might think him too sanguine; but he thought it quite possible that some then listening to him might live to see the products of China and the East journey-

ing down the Ottawa Valley and the Gulf of St. Lawrence on their way to Europe. The north-west territory, too, he looked upon as a part of Canada; or, if it was not, it should be, and he for one would never rest contented till it was recognised as such.' This amounts to an open declaration of war on the part of Canada. What will be the result? The clergy reserves, we know, were surrendered to the demands of the province, and the Hudson's-Bay Company must be content, in their case, to witness a repetition of the same process. A monopoly which consigns a territory, extending to the dimensions of an empire, to continued barbarism and barrenness, will no doubt have its advocates in this country as in Canada; but it cannot long stand in opposition to the wishes and just claims of the people of Canada, impeding their progress, and delaying the extension of civilization across the continent of North America, one of the glories still reserved for the Anglo-Saxon race."

The following extract, having reference to the treatment of the Indians by the Company, is copied from the *Morning Star* of November 1st:—

"There is another and equally important part of the question which Christian and humane Englishmen must not fail to investigate. We refer to the treatment of the Indian population by the Hudson's-Bay Company. Bound alike by the solemn obligations of Christian duty, and by the imperative instructions of the Colonial Office, to promote the civilization of the Indian, and even to subordinate the pursuit of gain to this high object, the Hudson's-Bay Company has accomplished nothing, has attempted nothing, in this direction. The history of the civilization of the Indian tribes under the Company's rule is a blank page in the book of time. But the history that should and must be written is a history of desolation and death. Not by the immutable law of Providence, but rather by the wickedness of selfish men, have the Indians perished by tens of thousands, until once powerful nations are reduced to a few scattered and miserable remnants. The servants of the Hudson's Bay Company have introduced among these unhappy children of the prairie and the forest those poisonous beverages which, while they excite the appetite and stimulate the passions, destroy the body and deteriorate the moral and intellectual nature. They have also visited the Indians with diseases far more to be dreaded than any pestilence—diseases which are known to be the most hideous scourge of civilized life. No countenance whatever has the Company, or its officers, ever given to Missionary efforts or civilizing agencies of any kind. Indeed, the Company's one great object is, to obtain furs at the lowest possible expense; and as attempts to civilize and ameliorate the condition of the Indians have tended to reduce the dividends of the shareholders, they have invariably been discouraged, as the Wesleyan Missionary Society can testify from the treatment which its own agents received from the Company's servants. The remedy for this anomalous state of things is simple, and may be easily applied. It is to be found in the abolition of the Company's monopoly; in the extension in the north-west of the healthful and constitutional government of Canada; in the opening up of the country to emigration; and in the settlement of the Indians on lands of their own, and the introduction among them of the advantages of civilized life. In the efforts which are now being put forth to carry out these great and praiseworthy objects we naturally feel a lively interest. And, indeed, every one must wish them success who desires to witness the universal spread of free-trade principles, and to promote the work of Christian enlightenment in distant lands."

The *Evening Star*, on the 13th November, urged the repeal of

the Hudson's-Bay Charter as a measure rendered necessary by the wants and interests of Canada, no less than by the claims of the Indian race. This journal states—

“Had it not been for the monopoly of the Hudson's-Bay Company, Canada might have extended as far west as the territories of the Union do now; nay, more, since the valley of the Lakes and the St. Lawrence is the natural outlet of the trade of the West, and that trade must, through its natural channel, centre in Montreal, there would be nothing to prevent that city having now the same commercial pre-eminence which she enjoyed in the days when even the wealth and pertinacity of John Jacob Astor succumbed before the power of the north-western traders. It is time for Canada to speak out, and say that she must no longer be fettered by obsolete charters and unconstitutional grants; but again be permitted that freedom and power of extension westward which she originally enjoyed. She may be sure the time is gone by when it could be thought necessary to carry such objects up the back stairs of the Colonial Office. So far from the people of England having any jealousy of the progress of Canada, they know that her developement is their gain, and they will gladly further it; but she must be prepared herself to take the initiative.”

A writer in the *Record*, whom we believe to be highly qualified to state the facts of the case, presents a deplorable picture of the condition of Rupert's Land, in that journal of the 17th September. We extract a portion of his statement of the grievances to which the Red-River colonists are subjected under the Company's rule—

“I leave the reader to draw his conclusions; but if, after all, the Company would still assert that they do all they can to improve the land, we would not only advert to the foregoing, but would also ask the following questions:— 1st. Why is this colony still in its infancy, and will not bear a comparison with the progress of colonies elsewhere? And why is it that there are no good roads in it, or leading from it, in any direction? 2dly. Why is it that at this moment it is denied the advantages of a market and an export trade? 3dly. Why is it that the Judge of the colony does not administer the civil and criminal laws upon the principles of equity and justice? 4thly. Why is it that the settlers cannot rely upon getting their supplies from the Company's ports for ready cash, unless he should be a wild man, hunting wild animals, and bringing skins and furs in exchange? 5thly. Why is it, that if perchance, at times, supplies are obtained, they are sold at such high prices; for example, sugar, one shilling per pound; rice, one shilling per pound; and salt, one shilling per quart? 6thly. Why is it that the settlers are restricted to a certain class of articles in their orders for goods to England, and that they are charged for freight at the rate of seventy per cent.? 7thly. And why are their arrangements such this moment in this colony as to drive the settlers to the extremity of arming themselves, and marching together in a body across the Indian plains to St. Paul and back, a journey of 1200 miles, exposing themselves to great peril and loss, for the purpose of getting supplies for the colony at a reasonable price? And why thus throw the resources of the country into the American market, instead of arranging more wisely to have expended in the British market moneys to the amount of several thousand pounds? And, lastly, why did a gentleman recently endeavour, and succeed to some extent, in draining off this settlement, by inducing some of the settlers to follow him to the Oregon Territory, under the countenance of the Company, who actually guaranteed to afford supplies for himself and party on the route, and afterwards promoted this gentleman to

an important post in their service for his hardy endeavours. Questions such as the foregoing crowd upon the mind in reference to this subject, but we forbear putting more, and will simply, in conclusion, advert to the evils which must arise in keeping this country in a state of bondage any longer. To be brief, the principle of injustice pervading the administration of the laws of the colony, 'a judge sitting in his own cause,' operated for a period of fourteen years; and the last stage at which it brought Mr. Thom was, that from the diffidence felt and expressed in the incorrectness of his decisions, he was obliged, at the instance of public opinion, to vacate office—not to mention the Court being surrounded, more than once, with several hundred armed men, to prevent his administering law. The Company, however, have followed upon the same principle; and they have appointed, if possible, even a more able man as his successor. So that this principle is in operation at the present moment, under far more dangerous circumstances to the well-being of the colony, because, during the latter part of the career of the former, there was a Governor in the colony, who had received his appointment by commission from the Colonial-office, owing to representations from Red River of the evils of the Hudson's-Bay Company's government; and while he was there he at least served as some check to the agents of the Company. But as he is now recalled, and as the Colonial-office has appointed no successor, the Judge, who has newly entered upon office, may proceed without any such check; and it will seem passing strange if, after Her Majesty's Government shall have received information upon the subject, that things are allowed to go on as they at present stand, because 'either a protective force, or a thorough change in the administration of law, is imperiously demanded,' are the words of Mr. Ross. Are 7000 settlers at Red River to be thus left entirely in the hands of the Company, who, in the language of one of its Deputy-Governors, would rather have a half-dozen wild Indians hunting furs than the whole of this civilized community? To proceed no further, the question resolves itself into this, Which of the two is of greatest value, man or beast? In the policy and scales of the Company, this moment, skins and furs weigh the heaviest, and the debased Indian and his starving family the lightest. And it falls to ourselves, as a nation, to decide whether this is to continue or not—whether the majesty of the British laws is to be thus promulgated—whether our feelings as a nation, on the side of civilization and the well-being of man, are thus to continue to be manifested in this dark land."

The *Record* of the same date, Sept. 17, contains a leading article commenting upon the statements made by the writer from whose communication we have just quoted. The Editor says:—

"Accusation is now publicly laid against the Hudson's-Bay Company on charges as grave and weighty as ever have been urged against a body at the bar of public opinion. It is asserted, that, so far from endeavouring to promote the internal welfare and develop the natural resources of the country committed to their charge, during the long period of nearly two hundred years, the Company, actuated by a narrow and selfish view of their own commercial interests, have systematically and designedly striven to retard them; that even when it was thought necessary to assume the semblance of some care for the moral welfare of its two hundred thousand subjects, the measures conceded for the purpose were accompanied with such practical restrictions as secured their necessary failure; that even in the administration of justice between man and man the first principles of right have not always been maintained; and that any member of the Council who ventured to propose measures conceived in a somewhat more liberal spirit for the welfare of the colony has ever met with

organized opposition and a hopeless repulse. Whether these charges can be maintained, or whether they admit of refutation, we have no opportunity of judging: The interests at stake are so large, that we gladly lend the help of our columns to the investigation of the question. The matter is too grave to be allowed to rest. Public opinion must demand searching inquiry whether these evils exist or not. The vested interests of the Hudson's-Bay Company cannot, for a moment, be allowed to stand in the way of this investigation, for the right of the Imperial Legislature to inquire in such a case, and, after inquiry, authoritatively to remedy proved abuses, has already been asserted, beyond controversy, in regard to the East-India Company. The interests of two hundred thousand of our fellow-men, both politically and religiously, absolutely outweigh all other and narrower considerations."

The *Economist*, in its impression of the 11th of October last, published a review of the Aborigines' Protection Society's Memorial to Mr. Labouchere, and, in reference to the five points urged upon the consideration of the Government in that document, our contemporary offers the following opinion:—

"None of these demands are wholly Utopian. Some of the North-American Indians who have been fairly dealt with have shewn themselves apt for civilization. And we all know what a powerful, manly, well-organized race has sprung up in the 'half-breeds.' M'Lean, in his 'Notes of a Twenty-five Years' Service in the Hudson's-Bay Territory,' speaks with enthusiasm of the converted Indians, now living on their farms, grouped round their Protestant Pastor. But, unhappily, such scenes are too rare. Instead of seeking to civilize the Indian, the white man has sought to demoralize him. 'Firewater' and other vices have been introduced into the wigwam, that the trader may thereby gain a better bargain, and found his fortune on the ruin of a race possessed of many great qualities. While hopeless Missions are organized for the Terra del Fuego, for the African Negro, and the idiotic Bushman,\* the grandly-organized American Indian is left to spoliation and degradation—we are not too severe in saying—because some Christian men find their advantage therein. If this be not the case, when the question of the trade licence granted to the Hudson's-Bay Company comes to be discussed, the facts set forth by the Aborigines' Protection Society will be discussed as well, and perhaps some of the Indians' righteous claims be conceded. The converted farming Indian shews what capacity for civilization lies in the pure native: the magnificent 'half-breed' proves what power of assimilation exists between the Aborigines and the emigrants; (such at least is the view of this writer;) and between these two great successes it will be hard if we cannot amalgamate and elevate, instead of destroying the Aborigines. It will be a grand thing to prove that the law of historical progress need not of necessity include ethnic annihilation, and that civilization may be generally beneficial, and yet not individually destructive."

The *Nonconformist* of the 24th Dec., in the course of some very appropriate remarks on the views expressed on this subject by the Assistant Secretary of the Aborigines Protection Society, furnishes the following testimony regarding the treatment of the Indians:—

"The Hudson's Bay Company, which comprises only some 232 persons, has,

\* We must not be understood as endorsing this view; and are sorry that so good an article should be marred by so unjust a prejudice.

during the two centuries of its existence, invariably pursued a cruel and selfish policy towards the aboriginal occupants of the soil, and sedulously aimed to exclude civilization from the wilderness they would ever reserve for the wild animal. If the evidence given is to be relied on—and we are bound to say that Mr. Chesson's allegations are in harmony with all we had previously read on the subject—the Hudson's-Bay Company stands convicted of having failed in its obligations, legally contracted, to the natives of the territory. It has made no efforts to secure for them the blessings of civilization and religion, but has, on the contrary, kept them in a state of the lowest degradation, demoralized them by intoxicating drink, enticed them from their customary pursuits, and reduced them to a state of dependence bordering on slavery. The exclusive licence to trade with the native inhabitants of the Indian territories in that region is an anomaly so entirely out of harmony with the middle of the nineteenth century, that we cannot suppose it will be long permitted to exist. Let the Company be called to account for the exercise of its stewardship by that Parliament from which it derives its title; and if it should appear that it has grossly abused its privileges, the Charter ought to be at once and for ever annulled. It is gratifying to know that the matter is being taken up with energy both at home and in Canada. Our North-American colony has a fair claim to exercise authority over a contiguous region, under the nominal sovereignty of the British Crown. To transfer the Indians of that vast territory from the despotism of a selfish trading corporation, owning no responsibility, to the care of the Canadian Government, based upon an enlightened public opinion, would be a change not less beneficial than humane.”\*

The Hudson's-Bay Question is one upon which the people of Canada have expressed a strong and unmistakeable opinion. The newspapers of the province, with scarcely an exception, have published numerous articles adverse to the pretensions of the Hudson's-Bay Company, and in favour of the views expressed and the measures proposed by the Aborigines' Protection Society. The Canadians forcibly contend that they possess a legal as well as a moral right to extend their boundaries westward towards the Pacific, and to occupy and colonise those vast regions which for numberless centuries have remained desolate and uncultivated. And if we may judge by their newspaper articles, and by the speeches of their public men, they are not unmindful of the claims of the aboriginal inhabitants of the immense territory which they seek to acquire; but will, in the event of their coming into possession of it, be prepared to adopt measures similar to those proposed by the Aborigines' Protection Society for the settlement of the Indians upon lands of their own, and for their physical, intellectual, and religious improvement and well-being. To afford the reader some idea of the manner in which the subject is being discussed by the leading journals of Canada, we deem it desirable to publish the following extracts.

On the 20th of October the *Hamilton Spectator* (understood to

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\* Among the provincial journals which have expressed similar views may be mentioned the *Glasgow Daily News* and the *Northern Daily Express*.

be the organ of a distinguished Canadian statesman) made the following remarks upon the Memorial of the Aborigines' Protection Society:—

"To obtain these objects will be no easy task; but the Society have entered upon the work with an apparent determination of doing all in their power. We published the other day a report of a conference had with Sir Allan N. MacNab, Bart., on the subject; and the conclusion arrived at was highly satisfactory. A petition, embodying the views of the Aborigines' Protection Society, will be presented to both branches of the Provincial Legislature at its next session, and we trust it will meet with all due consideration. It is high time that the position of matters connected with the claims of the Hudson's-Bay Company should be inquired into; and we can see no more effectual method of doing so than by the Canadian Legislature taking up the subject, and urging upon the Home Government to define the boundaries of the territory claimed by the Company. Canada must do something towards assuming the valuable tract of country now held by the Hudson's-Bay Company. In extent it is equal to two such States as Michigan; and the climate is better than at Montreal. There are numerous rivers; and the territory would be a splendid acquisition. If the efforts now put forth by the Aborigines' Society are duly encouraged by our Provincial Parliament, there can be little doubt of something being done towards the accomplishment of the object they have in view. We heartily wish them success in their movement."

The (Toronto) *Globe* has brought the subject before its readers in a series of able articles. Its first article referred to the labours of the Aborigines' Protection Society, "which (it writes) has long been engaged in the work of directing attention to the unjust and illegal pretensions of the Hudson's-Bay Company, and of ameliorating the condition particularly of the Indian tribes, who have become, in fact, the slaves of the Company." In an article on the unconstitutionality of the Company's Charter, and especially on the injustice of their claim to the country lying between Canada and the Rocky Mountains, the *Globe* (12th Nov.) thus deals with the question of "compensation" set up by the Company's organ in Canada—

"The *Montreal Herald* appears to be the organ of the Hudson's-Bay Company, who are evidently alarmed at the movement in England, and the public discussion which has arisen in Canada, as to the legality of their assumed rights; a discussion which has resulted in the establishment of the fact, that the Charter of Charles the Second, professing to confer upon the Hudson's-Bay Company exclusive rights and privileges, is *invalid and of no effect*. The Hudson's-Bay Company read the handwriting on the wall, and, cunningly affecting to do battle for Canadian interests, they are but struggling to preserve to the 200 monopolists of London some portion of their illegal usurpation: for while ostensibly using arguments against the establishment of a penal colony in Hudson's Bay, as prejudicial to Canada, our contemporary indites an essay on behalf of the Hudson's-Bay Company, and intimates that the Company will *con-* descend to give up the territory 'upon receiving a compensation.' The cool effrontery of this suggestion is somewhat amusing, and reminds us of the story where the thief proposed to restore to its owner the valuable animal



which he had stolen, upon the very reasonable conditions that he should be paid for his trouble and risk in effecting the theft, for his expenses incurred in working and taking care of the animal, and last, not least, that he should not be prosecuted for the felonious taking. The proposition is quite characteristic of that Company, which, under the pretence of a charter, invalid in law, have for so long a period exercised illegal claims, in defiance of law and justice, and of all those principles upon which the liberty of mankind is based. They have illegally enacted and exercised unjust and arbitrary laws, antagonistic to all those rights and privileges which every free people claim as their birthright. Under their laws they have established a Lynch-law authority, and confiscated the property of Canadian people and British subjects: they have subjected such men to imprisonment, and they have put such men to death, and dared to call the murder a judicial act! They have wrung money from Canadian settlers upon the Red River by false pretences, taking it in payment for lands to which they had no colour of claim. They have extorted money from those people under the pretence of Custom dues, which no legislative power, either British or Canadian, had authorised them to exact. When such a Company talks of compensation, let them reflect upon what they owe to the laws which they have outraged, and the rights of humanity which they have trampled beneath their feet. By the 1st and 2d Geo. IV., ch. 66, they are bound to send every felon for trial to Canadian Courts of Justice, and the penalty for each offence is 1000*l*. They have set that law at defiance, and libelled British law and Canadian justice by the mockery of a trial—Hudson's-Bay men, judges, prosecutors, and witnesses, and their creatures, their jury."

We extract the following from a recent number of the *Quebec Gazette*:—

"Our Government, in stating its views upon the matter, ought to endeavour to form a combination with the Imperial Government, for the purpose of directing the stream of Norwegian emigration to these and other British territories in North America. They are a hardy, industrious, and energetic race, acquainted with many comforts and devices for alleviating the severity of the climate, and would flourish more in the keen atmosphere of our northern regions, than among the pestilential swamps of the Western States. It is doubtless too prospective to dwell upon facts, that the Pacific Railroad must pass through the gap in the Rocky Mountains near the source of the Saskatchewan in British territory; or, that so vast is the net-work of lakes and rivers in these lands, that a canoe may voyage from the Gulf of Mexico to the Arctic Seas. In shewing the disadvantages of this monopoly, we have not mentioned one point, which we are surprised has so long escaped public denunciation. We allude to the open profligacy of the officers of the Company. It is indeed a frightful thing to think that the Indians who inhabit these vast districts have been given up to the lust of a few privileged and unprincipled adventurers, and that men, calling themselves gentlemen and Christians, have not hesitated to prostitute to their passions, and live in open profligacy with, their ignorant and deluded victims."

The *Montreal Gazette*, in its impression of the 10th of December, after referring to the prominence which, for a long time past, it has given to the condition of the Hudson's-Bay Territories, and the claim of Canada to the possession thereof, makes the following remarks:—

"The agitation of the question thus begun here was echoed from the other

side of the Atlantic. The Aborigines' Protection Society of London started up to new life and renewed effort; and the leading press of Britain has not been silent upon the subject. We believe that at least one member of the Imperial Government is prepared to act on behalf of Canada in this matter. The popular mind has been pretty effectually aroused in Britain and Canada. The presentation of the Address of the Aborigines' Society to Mr. Labouchere, and the conference subsequently held with Sir Allan MacNab, were indications of what was likely to be done in Britain: the Toronto meeting, of the proceedings at which we published a report a few days ago, is a first step in popular agitation on the subject in Canada. These are signs of the times, betokening the breaking down of the huge monopoly which now controls half this continent. It is a warning to the Company to set its house in order. The magnitude of this subject, the immense effect it is likely to have upon the fortune of Canada, can hardly be over-estimated. Our contemporary, the *New-York Albion*, is right in declaring that "this is, or ought to be, the Canadian topic of the day." Among the present party struggles, the petty intrigues of place-hunters and place-holders, this rises up as a matter for great minds to grapple with, and to rouse great hearts to action. There seems little difference of opinion among the press, or political parties of Canada, upon this point. Clear Grit and Ministerialist, Mr. Vankoughnet and Mr. George Brown, all seem to feel alike—that a great future destiny for the people of Canada is bound up in the disposal of this territory, and that it is the duty of the present generation to secure the prize for those who are to come after them. We know too little, and have cared too little, for that great West which should be our own. The enterprising men in the United States founded settlements in Oregon; and then juggled the British Government diplomatically out of what should have been our land. We know not how soon a nearly similar process may rob us of another slice of that territory. The Americans are pushing forward their settlements around the western end of Lake Superior; they occupy Pembina, on the Red River, just where the boundary line crosses it; they are pushing their outposts northward in Oregon; they are filling up all that territory; and their population will soon stray over the geographical boundary which divides their land from ours. And what are we doing to appropriate a territory which we should occupy? Nothing. The leaden weight of a great commercial monopoly keeps all slothful and torpid north of the forty-ninth parallel; and we have hitherto submitted quietly while other men have spoiled our patrimony. The British Government give the settlers on British lands a Company to govern them, which prevents them from the exercise of all the franchises which, as free men, they should enjoy; which cripples their industry and fetters their commerce; which taxes and spoils them of their gains. It sets up an authority as if for the express purpose of alienating the affections of those who seek to make the land productive from British rule, so admirably is its machinery adapted to that end. So we find many of the settlers at Red River discontented, and determined either to throw off the yoke of the Company, or seek freedom and more remunerative employment of their industry south of the forty-ninth parallel of latitude, under the stars and stripes. What more natural result to flow from such a cause? We may be told much about the paternal kindness and care of the Hudson's-Bay Company; and much they tell us about it may be true, just as it is true of the Government of Russia. But much of it is untrue also. That institution is very bad—almost, if not quite, intra-human—of which a friendly pen or pencil cannot sketch a bright side. But the pictures of the Hudson's-Bay Company's rule, painted *coulour de rose* by their friends and salaried servants, have their dark, black side, too, which it were not well for humanity to have too broadly painted: It may be a paternal

sort of government, but it is a paternal despotism nevertheless, and that is a system abhorrent to men who, in this age, are given to read and think. The affairs of the *métifs*, or half-breeds, at Red River, may be better managed by the Company; but when they can read and write, and think of what they read—when they have learned to know what the inalienable rights of British subjects are—it is but natural they should desire to use those rights, and act for themselves.”\*

The Meeting of the Toronto Board of Trade, alluded to in the above extract, was held on the 3d of December, and significantly indicates the state of public feeling in influential commercial circles in Canada. Our limited space prevents the re-publication, in these pages, of the proceedings of this important Meeting; and there is the less need for us to do so, seeing that they have been published without curtailment in the columns of several English journals. Mr. Alderman M'Donell, and Captain Kennedy (a native of the Hudson's-Bay Territories, and the commander of Lady Franklin's exploring expedition to the Arctic regions), made some important statements to prove the adaptability of the disputed soil for purposes of colonization, and to controvert the popular notion that it is a vast sterile and uninhabitable wilderness. The following extracts from Captain Kennedy's speech will afford some idea of the value of the country as an abode for civilized as well as uncivilized man:—

“On the coast of the portion of the territory where he had lived for eight years, whales, or rather porpoises were so abundant, that they could be caught by thousands. Smaller whales were also to be captured, and sealskins and other furs could be got in abundance. Coal and plumbago abounded in Hogarth's Inlet, so much so that they could be picked up on the sea shore. So numerous was the reindeer, that he had himself, with a party of twelve men, killed 216 reindeer in two hours. He had seen as many as ten or twelve thousand of them at one view. But the fur trade was a secondary consideration. The entire country, extending 400 miles from the boundary line to the north, was capable of cultivation of the same kind as was carried on in Canada. Particularly flax, tallow, and hides, which it was now necessary to procure from Russia, could just as easily be raised on those prairies. The country was as fertile as it could possibly be. The Red-River settlers were now

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\* Among other Canadian journals which are expressing strong views against the continuance of the Hudson's-Bay monopoly may be mentioned the *Toronto Colonist* and the *Montreal Evening Pilot*. We may here remark, that the Aborigines' Protection Society's Memorial to Mr. Labouchere has been re-published, without abridgement, in all the leading papers in the province. A valued correspondent at Toronto, writing to the Assistant Secretary under date of the 20th December, says—“In Canada the question of depriving the Hudson's-Bay Company of its monopoly is the question of the day. The agitation is proceeding throughout the province like wildfire. Hardly a paper appears in our cities or in our country parts without a column or so devoted to the ‘Hudson's-Bay Territory’ in large characters. The Government here are already prepared to take up the matter against the Company; and now if they wished to recede from such a movement they could not, without loss of office, the whole country being so unanimous in support of the proposal to drive the Company from this continent.”

opening up a communication with St. Paul's, and occasionally resorted to that city in a caravan of as many as 600 carts, taking their produce there, and getting American produce in exchange, as they found that more advantageous than trading with the Hudson's-Bay Company, who had done every thing in their power, resorting to a variety of expedients, to obstruct the progress of the settlement. The whole territory was larger than Europe, and as fertile, and it possessed as many facilities for commerce, both in the west and the east. Gold in great quantities was found on Vancouver's Island. He had in his possession a specimen of gold quartz from Governor Douglas' own garden; he had a specimen also from Queen Charlotte's Island; and it was reported that the Company had bribed a man to silence who had found the same metal on the Red River, knowing that so soon as the tide of emigration should set into that region their trade and power was gone. In the Red-River settlement the season commenced to be severe about the 1st of November. Farming operations began about the 1st of May. He believed meteorological tables would shew that the climate at Red River was not severer than at Toronto, taking the mean temperature of the whole year. Snow only lay in the wooded valleys. In the prairies, it was so thin that the buffaloes did not migrate south, but grazed on them the whole winter. The country was favourable for the construction of railroads. The distance between Lake Superior and Lake Winnipeg, in a direct line, was 200 miles, and the country, generally speaking, was level. The navigation was not so difficult: many of the rapids could be easily improved by blasting a few of the rocks. There was an abundance of coal along the banks of the Mackenzie and other rivers: it, indeed, fairly cropped the banks; and mineral tar was to be obtained there in such quantities, that the Company never made use of any other than this for their boats. Copper was also abundant, and in such a pure state that it might be chiselled out rather than mined from the beds. The entire sea-coast abounds with marine animals, and probably, ere long, the discovery would be made by the people of San Francisco, who would send out expeditions to gather them. The new Siberian country abounds with fossil, as well as natural ivory. He (Captain Kennedy) had a brother residing on Red River, and he had requested him to convene a meeting of the inhabitants of the settlement to express their views and opinions as to the country under whose jurisdiction they would like to be. If he had not misunderstood him, the people were very desirous of being under some other jurisdiction than that of the Hudson's-Bay Company, and seemed to prefer that of Canada. It was very likely that the views of the people would be embodied in a petition, which would be sent down to the Legislature of this country in the next session. We should then have an opportunity of knowing whether the Provincial Government would be more attentive to the wants of their fellow subjects than the Imperial Government.

The extracts we have given occupy all our available space, although they form but a small portion of those we had marked for quotation. We think, however, that we have published enough of them to justify the belief, which we confidently express, that the Hudson's Bay Question is assuming so much importance, that the Imperial Parliament will be compelled to consider it upon its merits, and to adopt measures in conformity with the rights of Canada, and the wants and the interests of the native population.